



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

For immediate release: Aug. 22, 2012 (12-15)
Contact: Mike Louisell (360) 902-1813

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, Washington 98504-2560
Visit our Web site at: agr.wa.gov
[Subscribe or unsubscribe to WSDA news releases](#)

State veterinarian: Make sure horses are vaccinated for West Nile virus

OLYMPIA – West Nile virus (WNV) is still a threat and Washington's state veterinarian wants to ensure horse owners take precautions, including getting vaccinations or booster shots for their horses.

Although no cases of equine WNV have been reported for the past two years in Washington, August and September are the most vulnerable months and will remain a risk until there is a frost, according to Dr. Leonard Eldridge. In early August, the state Department of Health was notified by Benton County Mosquito Control District of a mosquito sample that tested positive for WNV in Yakima County. More samples have tested positive since then. Earlier, surveillance detected a positive mosquito sample in Franklin County.

"While the best time may be to get your horses vaccinated in the spring, mosquitoes favor long stretches of warm weather," Eldridge said. "Now would be a good time to act as our neighboring states just this week reported equine cases of West Nile virus."

Washington led the nation in confirmed equine cases in 2009 (72 cases) and 2008 (41 cases).

WNV is spread by mosquitoes that have fed on an infected wild bird. The disease can sicken people, horses, many types of birds and other animals. Infected horses do not spread the disease to other horses or animals.

Eldridge said that the majority of WNV cases in horses are preventable with vaccination. Vaccinating a horse or getting the proper booster injections is the best way to help protect the animal and prevent greater expense from treating a horse infected by the disease. Infected horses that do become ill show a loss of coordination, loss of appetite, confusion, fever, stiffness and muscle weakness, particularly in the hindquarters.

"I urge horse owners to consult with their private veterinarian for recommendations on a complete immunization and animal health program," Eldridge said. Eldridge also recommends that horse owners take measures to reduce mosquito populations. Recommendations include:

- Removing standing water from yards and barns
- Removing old tires and garbage that may be rain soaked
- Changing water at least weekly in troughs or bird baths
- Keep horses in stalls or screened areas during the early morning and evening hours when mosquitoes are the most active and feeding.

Veterinarians who learn of potential WNV cases in horses or other animals should contact the State Veterinarian's Office at (360) 902-1881.

MORE

State Vet: Make sure horses are vaccinated for West Nile virus – Page 2 of 2
Aug. 22, 2012

State and local health departments, mosquito control districts, other state agencies and volunteers work together on environmental monitoring and prevention measures for the virus. Additional information on WNV can be found at the state [Department of Health Web site](http://www.doh.wa.gov/WNV) (www.doh.wa.gov/WNV).

###

Note: The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service maintains a Web site showing states with [West Nile virus equine cases in 2011](#) and earlier years.

WSDA is on [YouTube](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)

MORE